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Contact: Drew Nannis (202) 225-5065

STARK MOVES TO BLOCK CAFTA WITHOUT ACCESS TO GENERIC DRUGS FOR CAFTA COUNTRIES

WASHINGTON, DC -- U.S. Representative Pete Stark (D-CA, 13) and Rahm Emanuel (D-IL, 5th) will offer an amendment today to block passage of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) if Congress and the President do not agree to drop an article which limits generic drug access to Central American countries.

As written by the Bush Administration, CAFTA could limit generic drugs from entering Central American and Caribbean countries included in the agreement for 5 years. This would allow expensive, brand-name drugs – even those that have a generic form in the US – to continue their monopoly and charge CAFTA-nation residents the highest prices possible.

“CAFTA gives the most profitable industry on the planet, brand-name pharmaceuticals, an additional 5 years to exploit the sick in order to maximize profits,” Stark said. “While the Administration insincerely claims this agreement will help poorer nations, it simultaneously prevents those nations from accessing lower cost generic drugs. When the pharmaceutical industry puts profits ahead of patients it’s expected; when the Bush Administration does the same it’s morally reprehensible.”

This provision is just one example of how harmful CAFTA truly is. Dangerous concessions have also been made on labor rights and environmental standards. Stark added, “Congress should not vote on CAFTA; instead, the President should go back to the table and renegotiate CAFTA to protect American workers and the health of the people throughout Central America.”